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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/408,366	09/29/1999	KEISUKE HASHIMOTO	018775-765	3976

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EXAMINER

DASTOURI, MEHRDAD

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2623

DATE MAILED: 07/17/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/408,366

Applicant(s)

HASHIMOTO ET AL.

Examiner

Mehrdad Dastouri

Art Unit

2623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-18 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-18 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☒ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 4.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Specification

1. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities:

On Page 9, Line 11, "gamma correction section 20" should be corrected to "gamma correction section 16"; on Page 9, Line 14, "print section 26" should be corrected to "print section 22"; on Page 9, Lines 14/15, "density level setter 22" should be corrected to "density level setter 18"; on Page 9, Line 16, "gamma correction section 12" should be corrected to "gamma correction section 16"; on Page 9, Line 21, "density level setter 22" should be corrected to "density level setter 18"; on Page 9, Line 11, "gamma correction section 20" should be corrected to "gamma correction section 16"; on Page 9, Line 25, "(D/A) converter 24" should be corrected to "(D/A) converter 20"; on Page 10, Lines 2 and 3, "print section 26" should be corrected to "print section 22".

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Objection

2. Claim 18 is objected for the following informalities:

In Line 3 of Claim 18, "on which an edge is direction" should be corrected to "on which an edge is discriminated".

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the

invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-3, 5- 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sekine et al (U.S. 5,862,257) in view of Silver et al (U.S. 6,408,109).

Regarding Claim 1, Sekine et al discloses an image processor which processes multi-level image data on density levels of pixels, comprising:

an edge judgment circuit which discriminates an edge direction of a target pixel from the density level of the target pixel and adjacent pixels thereof based upon the multi-level image data (Figure 1, Edge Detection 13; Column 10, Lines 3-24); and

a density level determining circuit which determines density levels in a plurality of sub-pixels in the target pixel, where the target pixel is divided into the sub-pixels, in accordance with the density level of the target pixel and the edge direction of the target pixel discriminated by the edge judgment circuit (Column 5, Lines 53-67, Column 6, Lines 1-2; Figures 15 and 32; Column 21, Lines 65-67, Column 22, Lines 1-37, Fifth Embodiment. As depicted in Figure 32, resolution conversion (Step 1261) is performed on the sub-pixels of the target pixel as described in Column 9, Lines 45-65 and edge information obtained by outline developing section 124.).

Sekine et al do not explicitly disclose discriminating an edge direction of a target pixel from differences in density level between the target pixel and adjacent pixels thereof based upon the multi-level image data.

Edge detection based on the difference of the intensities of the adjacent pixels is well known in the art as disclosed by Silver et al. Silver et al disclose an apparatus for detecting and sub-pixel location of edges in digital images comprising discriminating an

edge direction of a target pixel from differences in density level between the target pixel and adjacent pixels thereof based upon the multi-level image data (Figures 1A-1D; Column 6, Lines 1-63, in particular Lines 30-39).

It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Sekine et al invention according to the teachings of Silver et al to discriminate edge direction of a target pixel from differences in density level between the target pixel and adjacent pixels thereof based upon the multi-level image data because it is a conventional methodology routinely implemented in the art based on the fact that the components of image gradient in a given direction is the first derivative of image brightness (Silver et al; Column 6, Lines 21-29).

Regarding Claim 2, Sekine et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 1, wherein the density level determining circuit comprises:

a density controller circuit which sets density-level setting parameters for each of the sub-pixels in the target pixel in accordance with the edge direction of the target pixel discriminated by said edge judgment circuit (Figures 5C-5D; 50C-50D and 15; Column 9, Lines 42-53); and

a density-level setter circuit which sets the density level of each of the plurality of sub-pixels in the target pixel based upon the density level of the target pixel by using the parameters set by said density controller circuit (Figures 5C-5D; 50C-50D and 15; Column 9, Lines 54-65).

Regarding Claim 3, Sekine et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 1, wherein said edge judgment circuit discriminates a first edge which

represents that an edge of a character image exists in a first direction relative to the target pixel, a second edge which represents that an edge of a character image exists in a second direction opposite to the first direction relative to the target pixel, and a narrow edge which represents that a character image exists at a center of the target pixel (Figures 4 and 14; Column 16, Lines 35-49)..

Regarding Claim 5, Sekine et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 1, further comprising:

a line width judgment circuit, which determines a width of a line including the target pixel (Figures 35-37; Column 23, Lines 20-67, Embodiment Sixth which is variation of Fifth Embodiment);

a smoothing circuit which performs smoothing on the image data of the target pixel and the adjacent pixels thereof in accordance to the line width determined by said line width judgment circuit and outputs the image data of the target pixel which have been smoothed (Figure 35, Smoothing Processing Section 1262; Column 22, Lines 10-17);

wherein the density level determining circuit determines the density levels in the plurality of sub-pixels in accordance with the density level of the target pixel subjected to smoothing by said smoothing circuit and the edge direction of the target pixel discriminated by the edge judgment circuit (Resolution Conversion Section 1261; Column 21, Lines 47-62).

With regards to Claims 6, 9 and 11, arguments analogous to those presented for Claim 2 are applicable to Claims 6, 9 and 11.

Regarding Claim 7, Sekine et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 6, wherein said line-width judgment circuit determines the line width of the line including the target pixel based upon the edge direction of the target pixel and those the adjacent pixels of the target pixel discriminated by the edge judgment circuit (Figures 35-37; Column 23, Lines 20-60).

Regarding Claim 8, Sekine et al do not explicitly disclose the image processor according to Claim 1, further comprising an edge judgment correction circuit connected to said edge judgment circuit and corrects the edge direction when the edge direction discriminated by said edge judgment circuit is not appropriate.

Silver et al disclose an apparatus for detecting and sub-pixel location of edges in digital images comprising an edge judgment correction circuit connected to the edge judgment circuit and corrects the edge direction when the edge direction discriminated by the edge judgment circuit is not appropriate (Column 3, Lines 19-36).

It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Sekine et al invention according to the teachings of Silver et al to incorporate further limitations of Claim 8 because it will enhance the extracted edge direction and improve the quality of the printed characters.

Regarding Claim 10, arguments analogous to those presented for Claim 2 are applicable to Claim 10. Sekine et al further disclose utilizing filtering operation for smoothing image data but do not disclose a specific filtering process.

Silver et al disclose smoothing on image data of the pixel, on which the edge judgment circuit discriminates an edge, by using an asymmetric filter having the target pixel at a center thereof (Figures 1A-1D; Column 6, Lines 30-63).

Regarding Claim 12, Silver et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 10, wherein said filter is asymmetrical with respect to a direction perpendicular to which a pixel is divided into sub-pixels (Figures 1A-1D; Column 6, Lines 30-63).

Regarding Claim 13, Silver et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 10, wherein said smoothing circuit comprises a plurality of filters and selects one of them for smoothing (Figures 1A-1D; Column 6, Lines 30-63).

Regarding Claim 14, Silver et al further disclose the image processor according to Claim 10, wherein said smoothing circuit comprises a plurality of filters and selects one of the filters which provides a minimum density level of the target pixel after the smoothing carried by the filters (Figures 1C-1D; Column 6, Lines 51-63).

Regarding Claim 15, arguments analogous to those presented for Claim 1 are applicable to Claim 15.

Regarding Claim 16, arguments analogous to those presented for Claim 5 are applicable to Claim 16.

With regards to Claim 17, arguments analogous to those presented for Claim 8 are applicable to Claim 17.

With regards to Claim 18, arguments analogous to those presented for Claim 10 are applicable to Claim 18.

5. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sekine et al (U.S. 5,862,257) further in view of Silver et al (U.S. 6,408,109) and Suzuki (U.S. 5,257,116).

Regarding Claim 4, neither Sekine et al nor Silver et al explicitly disclose the image processor according to Claim 1, wherein said edge judgment circuit cancels the discriminated edge direction when the density level of a pixel adjacent to the target pixel in the edge direction is larger than a threshold value.

Suzuki et al disclose a high definition image generating system comprising an edge-direction detecting circuit that cancels the discriminated edge direction when the density level of a pixel adjacent to the target pixel in the edge direction is larger than a threshold value (Column 6, Lines 18-54).

It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Sekine et al and Silver et al combination according to the teachings of Suzuki to cancel the discriminated edge direction when the density level of a pixel adjacent to the target pixel in the edge direction is larger than a threshold value because it will enhance the extracted edge direction and improve the quality of the printed characters.

Other prior art cited

6. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

U.S. Patent 5,559,530 to Yamashita et al is cited for image data processing apparatus.


U.S. Patent 6,040,911 to Nozaki et al is cited for reference image forming method and pattern inspection apparatus.

Contact Information

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Mehrdad Dastouri whose telephone number is (703) 305-2438. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Amelia Au can be reached on (703) 308-6604. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 308-9051 for regular communications and (703) 308-9051 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Technology Center Customer Service Office whose telephone number is (703) 306-0377.



Mehrdad Dastouri
Patent Examiner
Group Art Unit 2623
July 15, 2002